

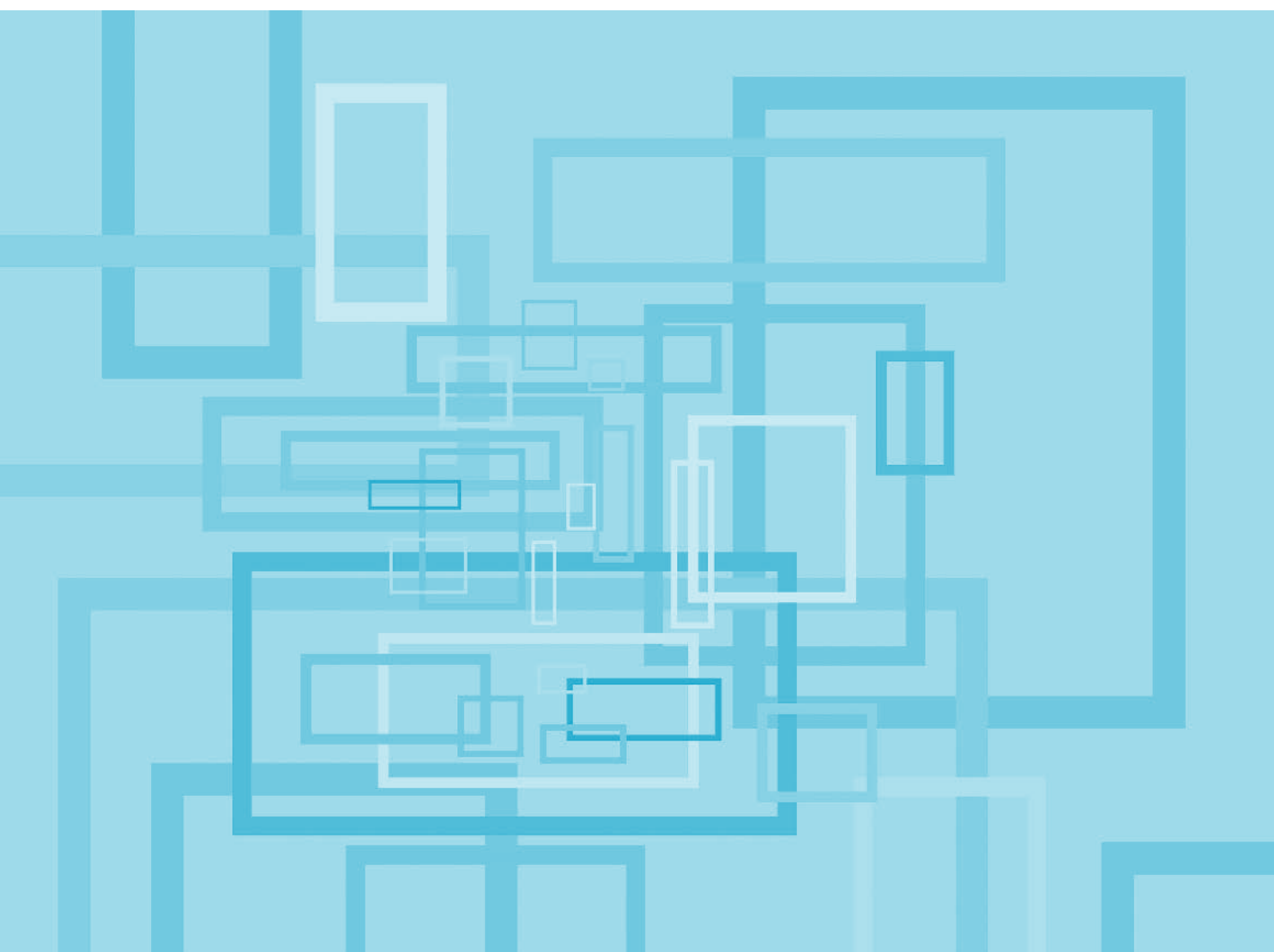


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Subject principles for GCSE English Language

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Information

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Subject principles for GCSE English Language

Audience	Awarding organisations and those delivering GCSE qualifications.
Overview	This document provides the framework for the development of the specification for GCSE English Language in Wales for first teaching from September 2015.
Action required	Awarding organisations must use this document as the framework and criteria within and against which to create the detail of the specification for GCSE English Language for Wales.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Qualifications and Regulation Division Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government Tŷ'r Afon Bedwas Road Bedwas Caerphilly CF83 8WT Tel: 01443 663725 e-mail: QualsReform@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Qualifications Wales website at www.qualificationswales.org/gcses-timeline-for-change/

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Introduction

This document outlines the rationale, aims and learning outcomes, content, assessment objectives, scheme of assessment and grade descriptions for the GCSE specification in English Language.

It provides the framework and criteria within and against which an awarding organisation or awarding organisations create the detail of the specification.

Subject principles are intended to:

- ensure that the rigour of GCSE is maintained
- ensure that the specification builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills established by the national curriculum for Wales and the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) and facilitates progression to higher-level qualifications in English Language.

An accredited specification must meet the requirements of the GCSE qualification principles as well as the relevant subject principles.

Rationale

1. A new GCSE English Language is being introduced for use in Wales in response to recommendation 18 of the final report of the *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales* (Welsh Government, 2012).
2. Recommendation 18 stated that:

‘the Welsh Government should review GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh First Language in order to introduce revised GCSEs in these subjects for teaching from September 2015.’

‘The new qualifications should provide greater assurance of literacy:
 - by building explicitly on the levels of literacy that are expected to be developed by the end of Key Stage 3 in response to the new Literacy and Numeracy Framework
 - in English Language, by placing significantly more emphasis on the quality and accuracy of writing and on core writing skills such as spelling, punctuation and grammar than the specifications that were taught from September 2010
 - by being assessed predominantly through externally marked assessments that are consistent across Wales and between the two languages.’
3. Reasons given for the recommendation included:
 - ‘the levels of literacy demonstrated by many learners are not high enough

- the current GCSEs in English Language/Welsh First Language are widely expected to be, but are not, reliable indicators of appropriate levels of literacy. Some employers and universities consider that grade C, or even above, does not guarantee sufficient literacy
 - there is a view that there has been insufficient focus on the quality of writing in GCSE English Language
 - controlled assessment is considered by many not to be appropriate for English Language/Welsh First Language GCSEs. It is felt that a greater level of externality and control is desirable for these subjects.'
4. GCSE English Language will build on and progress from the levels of literacy expected at the end of Key Stage 3 through the LNF.
 5. GCSE English Language will focus primarily on the **functional** aspects of language. The term 'functional' here should be considered in the broad sense of providing learners with the skills and abilities they need to take an active and responsible role in their communities, everyday life, the workplace and in educational settings.
 6. Oracy, reading and writing skills will be recognised in GCSE English Language. We expect candidates to be inspired, moved and challenged by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study. They will develop their ability to use English as active and informed citizens and be able to speak, listen, read and write fluently, appropriately, effectively and critically – for a wide range of personal, functional and social purposes. Candidates will be expected to respond to a wide range of written texts, including challenging and dynamic texts. They will develop the knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
 7. By making use of their oral, reading and written communication skills, they will be better prepared for the world of work in the twenty-first century and to participate effectively in a bilingual society. Candidates studying both GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh Language will develop their dual-literacy and translingual skills and these transferable skills will provide a foundation for learning additional languages in school and in later life.
 8. GCSE English Language will be consistent with the National Curriculum Key Stage 4 Programme of Study requirements for English and Welsh in Wales and the expectations set out for literacy as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) in Key Stage 4 (KS4).
 9. By introducing a greater focus on the aspects of literacy described above along with new reporting arrangements, the new GCSE in English Language will provide employers and others with greater assurance of candidates' literacy skills.
- Key Stage 2–4 Programmes of Study and the LNF**
10. The literacy components within the LNF have been developed in a way that expectations for English and Welsh are similar. The re-designed draft Programmes of Study (PoS) for English and Welsh in Key Stages 2–4 have

been developed in a similar vein, taking into account unique, distinct aspects particular to one language or the other. The skills to be applied across the two languages are almost identical and can be transferable from one language to the other. This means that learners in English, Welsh and bilingual schools will be focusing on the same literacy and language skills (regardless of the main language of provision). This will support the development of dual-literacy, providing a foundation for learning additional languages in school and in later life.

Aims and learning outcomes

11. The GCSE specification in English Language will enable learners to:
 - demonstrate oracy (speaking and listening), reading and writing skills that are instrumental in communicating with others confidently, effectively, precisely and appropriately
 - demonstrate their proficiency in accessing and retrieving information from a wide range of written and dynamic/digital texts, forming a broad general understanding of the text, summarising and synthesising content, inferring intended meaning and evaluating its purpose
 - understand the patterns, structures and conventions of oral and written language
 - understand the impact of variations in language, selecting and adapting speech and writing to different situations, purposes and audiences
 - develop their skills in order to meet their own personal needs as well as the needs of employers and further education so that they can fully participate in society and the world of work
 - develop their verbal reasoning and their ability to think constructively and critically in response to written and digital/dynamic texts
 - acquire the necessary skills needed for further study, including the study of English at Level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework.

Subject content

12. The content of the GCSE specification in English Language must reflect the aims and learning outcomes.
13. The GCSE specification in English Language must specify the content in ways that promote an integrated approach to oracy, reading and writing so that writing and oracy work are stimulated by reading experiences.
14. The GCSE specification in English Language must be consistent with the National Curriculum Key Stage 4 (KS4) Programme of Study (PoS) for Wales and the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF).
15. The GCSE specification in English Language must allow learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of language and its use as specified below.

Oracy skills

- Present information and select/organise information and ideas effectively and persuasively, *e.g. for a prepared spoken presentation or group discussion.*
- Demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of spoken language in both formal and informal situations.
- Speak accurately and fluently, adapting style and language to a wide range of forms, contexts, audiences and purposes.
- Experiment with language and techniques to express opinions, create effects and engage audiences.
- Pay appropriate attention to accuracy of syntax and expression
- convey experiences, ideas and information clearly, precisely and appropriately.
- Use verbal reasoning skills, form independent views and demonstrate effective listening skills by summarising key points, challenging what is heard on the grounds of reason, evidence or argument.
- Respond constructively and critically to a wide range of written and digital/dynamic texts, making effective contributions, using creative approaches to exploring issues, solving problems and developing ideas.
- Reflect and comment critically on their own and others' use of language, participate in a range of real-life contexts and adapt talk appropriately to the situation and audience.

Reading skills

- Respond, reflect and analyse a wide range of written texts (continuous and non-continuous¹).
- Analyse and respond to texts and their subtexts, using inference and deduction and linking ideas within or across texts.
- Demonstrate independence in synthesising and summarising information effectively from a range of texts.
- Interpret themes, meaning, ideas and information in a range of texts and challenging writing; reading in different ways for different purposes, and comparing and evaluating the usefulness, relevance and presentation of content.
- Support a point of view by referring to evidence within texts; identifying bias and distinguishing between statements that are supported by evidence and those that are not.
- Evaluate and reflect on the ways in which texts may be interpreted differently according to the perspective of the reader and distinguishing between facts or evidence and opinions, bias and argument.
- Understand and recognise the purpose and reliability of texts, *e.g. texts for personal, public, occupational and educational use.*
- Demonstrate verbal reasoning skills in synthesising and summarising information from a range of texts.

¹ Continuous texts will include newspaper reports, essays, extracts from novels, short stories, forum-style blogs, news websites, public notices, reviews and letters. Non-continuous texts will include diagrams, lists, tables, graphs, diagrams, advertisements, schedules, catalogues and indexes, which include written language.

Writing skills

- Produce clear and coherent written texts.
- Write effectively for different purposes and audiences and in different forms, *e.g. explain, instruct, recount, inform, discuss, persuade, argue*.
- Select vocabulary, grammar, form, and structural and organisational features thoughtfully to reflect the audience, purpose and context.
- Vary sentence structures to engage and sustain the reader's interest and write with grammatical accuracy.
- Use a full range of punctuation in order to vary pace, clarify meaning, avoid ambiguity and create deliberate effects.
- Organise writing in an appropriate form, ensuring content is detailed within and between paragraphs or sections, developing and sustaining ideas coherently.
- Use language creatively and with precision.
- Use information gleaned from a range of sources to write coherently in different forms.
- Write for effect by selecting, organising and emphasising facts, ideas and key points and citing compelling evidence to support views.

Assessment objectives and their weightings

16. The assessment objectives for GCSE English Language and their relative weightings will be as follows:

Assessment objectives		Weighting
AO1	Oracy	20%
AO2	Reading	40%
AO3	Writing	40%

17. The specification will require candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in the following assessment objectives.

AO1 Oracy

- Present and organise information clearly and purposefully, sustaining and adapting their talk in formal and informal situations using a variety of techniques and verbal reasoning skills as appropriate.
- Listen and respond appropriately to other speakers' ideas, questions and perspectives, and how they construct and express meanings.
- Interact with others, shaping meaning through suggestions, comments and questions and drawing ideas together.
- Use a range of appropriate sentence structures appropriately for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate grammar and expression.

Half of the available credit for AO1 will be awarded for the choice of appropriate register, grammatical accuracy and range of sentence structures with the remainder for content and organisation.

AO2 Reading

- Use inference and deduction skills to retrieve and analyse information from a wide range of written texts.
- Synthesise and summarise information from a range of texts.
- Interpret themes, meaning, ideas and information in a range of texts and challenging writing.
- Edit texts and compare and evaluate the usefulness, relevance and presentation of content within or across texts.
- Refer to evidence within texts, distinguishing between statements that are supported by evidence and those that are not.
- Evaluate and reflect on the ways in which texts may be interpreted differently according to the perspective of the reader and distinguishing between facts or evidence and opinions, bias and argument.
- Understand and recognise the purpose and reliability of texts, *e.g. texts for personal, public, occupational and educational use.*

AO3 Writing

- Write to communicate clearly and effectively, using and adapting register and forms and selecting vocabulary and style appropriate to task and purpose in ways that engage the reader.
- Use linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational features in their own writing to achieve particular effects, to engage and influence the reader and to support overall coherence.
- Use a range of sentence structures and paragraphs appropriately for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Half of the available credit for AO3 will be awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammatical accuracy.

Scheme of assessment

18. GCSE English Language will be a linear specification: all assessments must be taken at the end of the course, which will usually be in May or June.
19. There will be a resit opportunity in November each year.
20. There will be three assessment components as follows:
 - Component 1: Oracy (controlled assessment)
 - Component 2: Reading and Writing (external examination)
 - Component 3: Reading and Writing (external examination)
21. Although performance against each of the three assessment objectives will be reported upon separately, reading and writing will be assessed in both external examinations.

22. All assessment components will cater for the full range of ability and will be untiered.

Component 1: Oracy

23. Oracy will be assessed via controlled assessment. Candidates will undertake two tasks.

- An individual, researched presentation.
- A group discussion.

24. The tasks will be equally weighted.

25. 50 per cent of the marks will be awarded for the choice of appropriate register, grammatical accuracy and range of sentence structures with the remainder for content and organisation. Grammatical accuracy will be broadly defined as the definitions and statements of the LNF.

Components 2 and 3: Reading and writing

26. Both components will be assessed via two external examinations of between one and a half and two hours in length. The assessment of both reading and writing should feature as significant elements on both examination papers.

Reading section

27. A range of continuous/non-continuous texts will be included on both papers. Some texts will require very little reading but others will require more in-depth reading and will be more challenging. There will be a variety of texts, requiring different reading approaches and responses. Some questions will be short (*e.g. multiple choice questions, short constructed responses, cloze, sequencing*). Others will require longer answers (*e.g. paraphrasing, context comprehension, analysis/deduction/inference*).
28. Up to five questions will be asked on every individual stimulus text. The content/context of the chosen texts will prepare candidates for working life, further study and reading for enjoyment.

Writing section

29. The reading texts of both papers can be used as stimulus material for the subsequent writing elements.
30. The focus will be on the **quality** of writing rather than on undue length. Some of the writing tasks will require a brief response whilst others will focus on extended writing. Candidates will have up to one hour (on both papers) to produce up to three pieces of writing.
31. Candidates will respond in writing using a range of description, narration, exposition, argumentation or transactional texts. The tasks will be based on real-life contexts and scenarios and will include, for example, instructional, informative and persuasive texts, for personal, practical and public purposes, *e.g. report, formal letter, speech*.

32. 50 per cent of the marks awarded in the writing section of both components will be awarded for writing accurately (incorporating language and grammar, punctuation and spelling) with the remainder for communicating and organising (incorporating meaning, purposes and readers as well as structure and organisation).
33. A new section on **editing and proofreading skills** will be included in the new English Language GCSE. A limited number of marks will be attributed to the skill of redrafting and these will account for approximately 5 per cent of the whole qualification.
34. Whilst it is recognised that reading and writing skills are often intertwined, for assessment purposes two questions will be included in this section.
 - An editing question mainly focusing on reading skills.
 - A proofreading question mainly focusing on writing skills.

Editing questions will include elements such as the organisation of information, its presentation, and paragraphing and sentence structure. Proofreading questions will require candidates to concentrate on aspects of writing such as grammar, spelling and punctuation.

35. Dictionaries will not be permitted during any of the assessments.

Grade descriptions

36. Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades and will reflect the level of performance across the three assessment components. Shortcomings in some aspects of candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

Grade A	<p>Candidates make a range of contributions to discussions in a wide range of contexts and in a range of formal and informal situations. They listen to complex information, giving relevant, cogent and engaging responses. They make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts, presenting complex information ideas and views persuasively. They are able to independently fulfil the demands of a range of roles and move discussions forward skilfully. They confidently vary sentence structures and choose from a broad repertoire of vocabulary to express information and feelings in an engaging and creative manner.</p> <p>Candidates are able to select, analyse and evaluate information, ideas, opinions, purpose, implicit meaning and/or bias within a wide range of texts and text types. They demonstrate a secure overview of challenging texts when gathering information, ideas, arguments and opinions for different purposes. They make cogent and critical responses and show originality in analysis and interpretation. They make assured and astute responses to key</p>
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	<p>ideas and themes and use inference, deduction and analysis effectively. They are able to summarise and synthesise information and ideas succinctly from different sources.</p> <p>Candidates' writing shows confident, assured control of a range of forms and styles, appropriate to task and purpose. Their writing engages and holds the reader's interest through logical argument, persuasive force or inspired originality. Linguistic and structural features are used skilfully to sequence texts and achieve coherence. They write documents on complex subjects, concisely and clearly, logically and persuasively, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions effectively and persuasively. A wide range of accurate sentence structures ensures clarity; choices of vocabulary are ambitious and imaginative; grammar, punctuation and spelling are correct.</p>
Grade C	<p>Candidates take full part in formal and informal discussions/exchanges and contribute confidently in different situations and contexts. They prepare for formal and informal discussions, listening carefully and developing their own and others' ideas, giving valid, well-thought-out reasons for their opinions. They use a variety of sentence structures accurately and select vocabulary and phrases so that ideas, experiences, information, views and feelings are communicated clearly, maintaining the listener's interest.</p> <p>Candidates are able to understand and demonstrate how meaning and information are conveyed in a range of complex texts. They can identify the main points, ideas and purpose within a range of texts and text types including reports, instructional, explanatory and persuasive texts. They are able to make personal and critical responses, referring to specific aspects of language, grammar, structure and presentational devices to justify their views. They are able to summarise and synthesise information/ideas from different sources.</p> <p>Candidates' writing shows successful adaptation of form and style to different tasks and for various purposes. They write documents clearly and coherently to communicate information, ideas and opinions using language, formats and styles suitable for their purpose and audience. Paragraphing is used effectively to make the sequence of events or development of ideas coherent and clear to the reader. Sentence structures are varied and grammar, punctuation and spelling are accurate to create different effects and to engage the reader's interest.</p>
Grade F	<p>Candidates talk confidently in familiar situations, showing some awareness of purpose and of listeners needs. They convey information and experiences, develop ideas and describe feelings and views clearly, showing some ability to give reasons and using</p>

	<p>the features of the language, as appropriate. They listen with concentration and make relevant responses to the ideas and opinion of others. In formal and informal settings they attempt to use appropriate language accurately.</p> <p>Candidates understand and are able to describe the main ideas, themes or arguments in a range of written texts. They are able to understand straightforward texts and can independently identify the main purposes of different formats. They show some awareness of how texts achieve their effects through writers' use of presentational devices.</p> <p>Candidates' writing shows some adaptation of form and style for different tasks, purposes and audiences. The writing is straightforward on the whole and vocabulary and phrases are sometimes chosen for variety and interest. Paragraphing is straightforward but effective and the structure of sentences, including some that are complex, is usually correct. Grammar, spelling and basic punctuation are mostly accurate.</p>
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Reporting

37. In addition to the overall grade achieved for the qualification, candidates' certificates will include an indication of their relative performance against each of the assessment objectives.